

A PRAYER BEFORE WORSHIP

With all who have ever sought you,
With all who have ever found you,
With all faithful people in the Body of Christ,
I come to you, O God.
Out of my doubts and fears, I come to acknowledge
you.
Out of my forgetfulness, I come to remember you.
Out of my indifference, I come to love you.
Out of my sin, I come with repentance.
Out of my darkness, I come to your light.
Out of my weakness, I come to your strength.
Out of my restlessness, I come to your peace.
(M.L. Yates)

A PRAYER BEFORE LEAVING CHURCH

Father, as I leave this holy place, I give you thanks
for the great gift of your Son and the knowledge that
through him we can come to know you more
perfectly and join together in his Body, the Church,
to worship you.
Now I dedicate myself to you afresh as I go back to
take my place in the world which you have created:
I give you my hands to do your work.
I give you my feet to follow Christ.
I give you my eyes to see what you see.
I give you my tongue to speak your words.
I give you my mind that you may think through me.
I give you my heart that you may love through me.
I give you my whole self that you may grow in me.
Grant that in the power of your Holy Spirit I may
always be ready to love, adore, and glorify you by
the doing of your will wherever I may be.

Come into his presence

PREPARING FOR WORSHIP

Enter the Church
as if the floor
within were gold,
and every wall
of jewels
all of wealth untold;
as if a choir
in robes of fire
were singing here.
Nor shout, nor rush,
but hush....
FOR GOD IS HERE.

*Engraved on the doors of
some old churches of the
Church of England*

worship - [from the Old English word *weorthscipe*, meaning honor, dignity, reverence] the reverent love accorded God; rites and ceremonies by which this love and reverence is expressed; ardent humble devotion; the honor and love of God.

Worship, like anything that is truly worth doing, takes work and preparation. What follows are suggestions and aids to help us prepare for worship, acts and prayers to help us prepare to offer our ardent love to God.

The place of worship has been designed and set apart for a purpose. It may be grand like the cathedrals of Europe or it may be as humble as the field in which Jacob rested his head on a rock for a pillow, but it is holy because it is the place

where we encounter God himself. Moses took off his shoes in the presence of God in the burning bush in the wilderness, and Isaiah cried out in anguish at his unworthiness to be in the presence of God in the temple in Jerusalem. To approach God in worship requires a proper attitude and intentional preparation.

ENTERING THE CHURCH

Arriving at the Church at the last minute doesn't work. Plan to arrive early. Save conversation with other people until after the service. Kneel down and ask the Holy Spirit to direct and guide your worship. Prayer #64 on page 833 of the Prayer Book is a good place to start, but using your own words is also great. Find the beginning of the service in the Prayer Book. Look up the hymns. If you are reading a lesson, go to the Lectern and read it over ahead of time. Check the pronunciation of unfamiliar words and names.

PERSONAL HOUSECLEANING

Getting our house in order goes with having company. It is also in order before we worship as we are "keeping company with God." Are there things that will get in the way of our worship? Things like anger, resentment, pride, the need to have our own way? Take a look at your life and make a mental list of what you need to confess. Need help? The Litany of Penitence in the Prayer Book, page 267, is a good place to start. One of the great gifts of Holy Communion is the forgiveness of sin, but we need to be honest and specific in confessing our sin.

QUIETING AND CENTERING OURSELVES

We need to make a transition from the hustle and bustle in our lives to that "ardent and humble devotion." We need to quiet ourselves and center ourselves on God. We need to remind ourselves, "Surely the Lord is in this place.... How awesome is this place! This is none other than the house of God, and this is the gate of heaven." (Genesis 28:16-17). The presence of God is an awesome place, and it is also a place where we are invited to find rest. "There remains a Sabbath rest for the people of God; for whoever enters God's rest also ceases from his labors as God did from his. Let us therefore strive to enter that rest...." (Hebrews 4:9-11)

CENTERING PRAYERS

Repetition of a short prayer or text of Scripture is an effective way to begin centering ourselves, before moving on to other prayers.

Living and true God, Creator of all things,
You I worship, you I adore.
(Attributed to St Alban, first martyr of Britain)

How awesome is this place! This is none other than
the house of God, and this is the gate of heaven.

Peace before us, peace behind us,
Peace under our feet.

Peace within us. Peace over us.

Let all around us be peace.

*(Based on a Navajo prayer. Repeat this prayer replacing
the word peace with love, then light, then Christ.)*

Christ be with me, Christ within me,
Christ behind me, Christ before me,
Christ beside me, Christ to win me,
Christ to comfort and restore me.
Christ beneath me, Christ above me,
Christ in quiet, Christ in danger,
Christ in hearts of all that love me,
Christ in mouth of friend and stranger.

(From St Patrick's Breastplate)

All highest glorious God, cast your light into the
darkness of my heart. Give me right faith, firm hope,
perfect charity, profound humility, with wisdom and
discernment, O Lord, that I may do what is truly
your holy will.

(A prayer of St Francis of Assisi)